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XVI.—*The Landfall of Columbus on his first Voyage to America.*

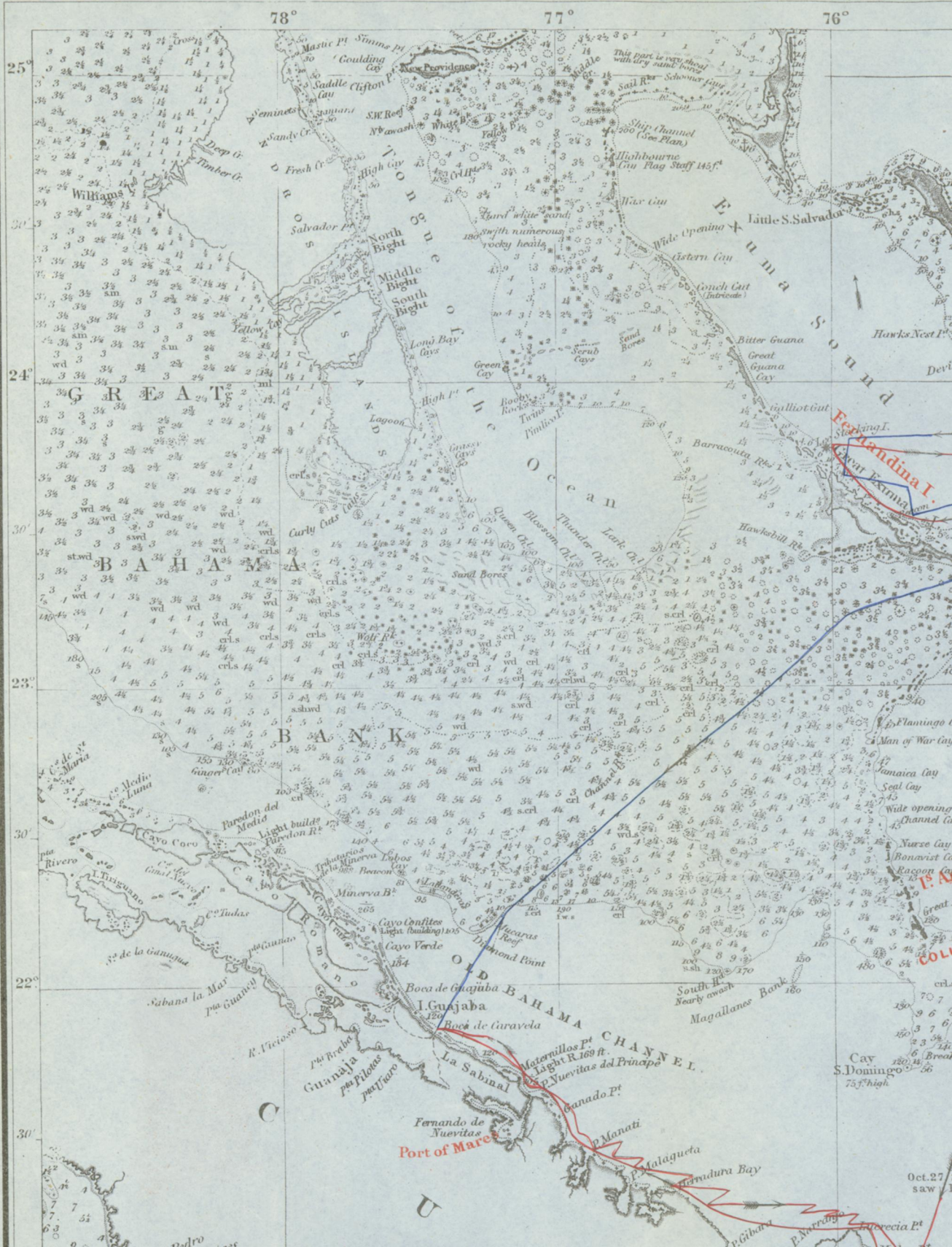
By Capt. A. B. BECHER, R.N., F.R.A. and R.G.S.

Read, June 23, 1856.

THE land discovered by Columbus at the end of his first voyage across the Atlantic, on the 12th of October, 1492, or, as termed by seamen, his landfall, must ever be a point of interest in the history of America, and therefore an account of that discovery founded on his own statement, may not be considered unworthy of preservation among even the discoveries of modern days, which are the more legitimate objects of the Royal Geographical Society. With this view the following statement is offered for its acceptance.

It is well known that two islands about 300 m. apart from each other, one named the Grand Turk and the other Cat Island, are held by different authorities to be the San Salvador of Columbus, the name of that little island ("isleta" he terms it in alluding to it about three months after he discovered it), on which this great Admiral first set his foot on American ground. The former is the adoption of Señor Navarrete when he was the chief of the Hydrographic Office at Madrid, and the latter that of Washington Irving, in his *Life of the Admiral*, published in 1823. Turk's Island in certain respects answers the description of San Salvador as given by Columbus, excepting that there was not so much water as would justify the expression of Columbus, when he states that he found there "muchas aguas," or water in abundance. But there are other conditions which entirely set aside all possibility of Columbus ever having seen Turk's Island, that will become evident in the sequel of this paper, and will prove that Señor Navarrete was wholly mistaken when he came to that conclusion, and that, although he himself had printed the very words of Columbus by which his mistake will be shown, he had not the good fortune to perceive it.

No less mistaken, though nearer to the actual island on which Columbus landed, was Washington Irving, in his conclusion that Cat Island first received the great Admiral at the end of his voyage, and this gentleman's view of the subject has been strenuously supported by Baron Humboldt, in his elaborate work entitled "*A Critical Inquiry into the History of America.*" Cat Island had long been supposed by geographers to be the San Salvador of Columbus, and seems only to have been renewed in that character by Washington Irving in his *Life of the Admiral*. But it is also very well known that there are certain features about Cat Island, that do not coincide with the description of San Salvador by Columbus, and that it is totally inadmissible as his landfall, though it has long been so called. There were in fact objections to both of these islands being San Salvador, but of a different kind; and



[illegible]

75 Wee

Cat Island
The Supposed
Salvador

San Salvador
Island.

12 Oct. 1492 daylight
THE LANDEALL

Proposed false

Conception I. 1850

Rum Cay

See Enlarged Plan

Samana or
Atwoods Cay

Saomete
Isab



Proposed
FRAGRANT
ISLES

E₁ Breaker

Planas or French Cays

Abrahams Bay

Cuidado

Little Magna L

NE Point

Oct. 27 Sunset
saw Land.

20 Nov.

Hogsty Reef

W. Entrance

ORNL 10

35 9 13 14 15 W. 7

20

Great Hall

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the 1995 Survey of Income and Program Participation.



10

Salvo de

100

100 100 100

End Point

1999

THE
CROOKED ISLES
Proposed
FRAGRANT ISLES.
OF COLUMBUS.
1492.

Long Island.
Proposed
Concepcion Island.
C. del Isleo
Saomete or Isabella I.
C. Laguna
C. Formosa
CROOKED IS.
Miraporvos

12 Oct.
C. Verde
Pinta E.S.E.
Columbus S.E.
Nifa S.S.E.
24 Oct.
Evening
9 A.M. 25 Oct.
W. S.W. 7 Leagues
Diana Bank
Sand & Coral
North R.
South Cay
Salina Pt.
Jamaica Bay
South Bluff
Castle Id.
Mt. Pichon
Greek Pt.
Abrahams Bay
Low dry Rocks
Fish Cays
W. 20
TURTLE CREEK (passage for Boats to East Harbour)
TUBES ISLAND PASSAGE
MOCHOIR CARRIE PASSAGE
S.W. Point
sandy

72° 71° West Longitude 70°
75 West Longitude 74
23° 22°
75° 74°
24°

0 1

Most probable course to S.W. on Sand

THE
CROOKED ISLES
Proposed
FRAGRANT ISLES.
OF COLUMBUS.
1492.

Long Island.

Proposed
Concepcion Island

OF COLUMBUS
1492.

C del Isl

Saomete or Isabella I.

~~C. Laguna~~

C. Formosa

Diana Bank ^{14 19 4}
Sand & Coral ^{44 9 42}

9 A.M. 25 Oct.

North R¹
South Cay
Mirapov

Salina Pt. 18° 20' N

Jamaica Bay

70° 20' W 70° 30' W

10 miles

Castle Island

TURKS ISLAND

MOUCHOIR CARRE PASSAGE

S.W. Point
sandy

67°

25

30

24

30

23

30

24°

22

30

N.E. end of Watling Island, A. A. Remarkable White Rocks, which form Grahams Harbour bearing W b N. 3 Leagues. H.M. Cutter Landrail July 17th 1816.

as seen from ©

WATLING ISLAND.

By M^r E. Barnett R.N. 1816.

THE
SAN SALVADOR
OF COLUMBUS,
1492.
The Landfall.

SCALE
2
1
Miles

Riding Rock Point

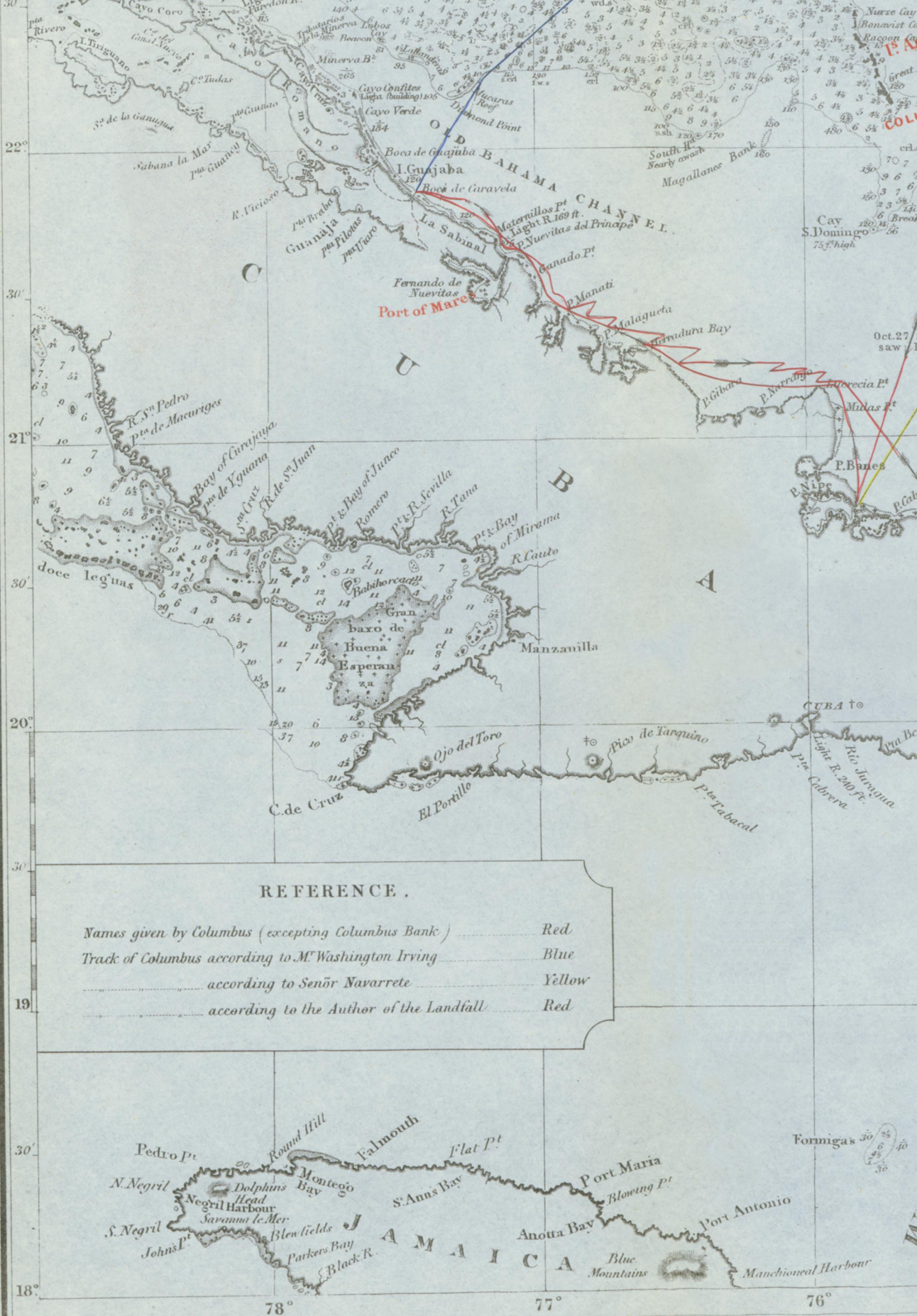
able course to S. W. on Sunday 14 Oct

W. Poin
sandy

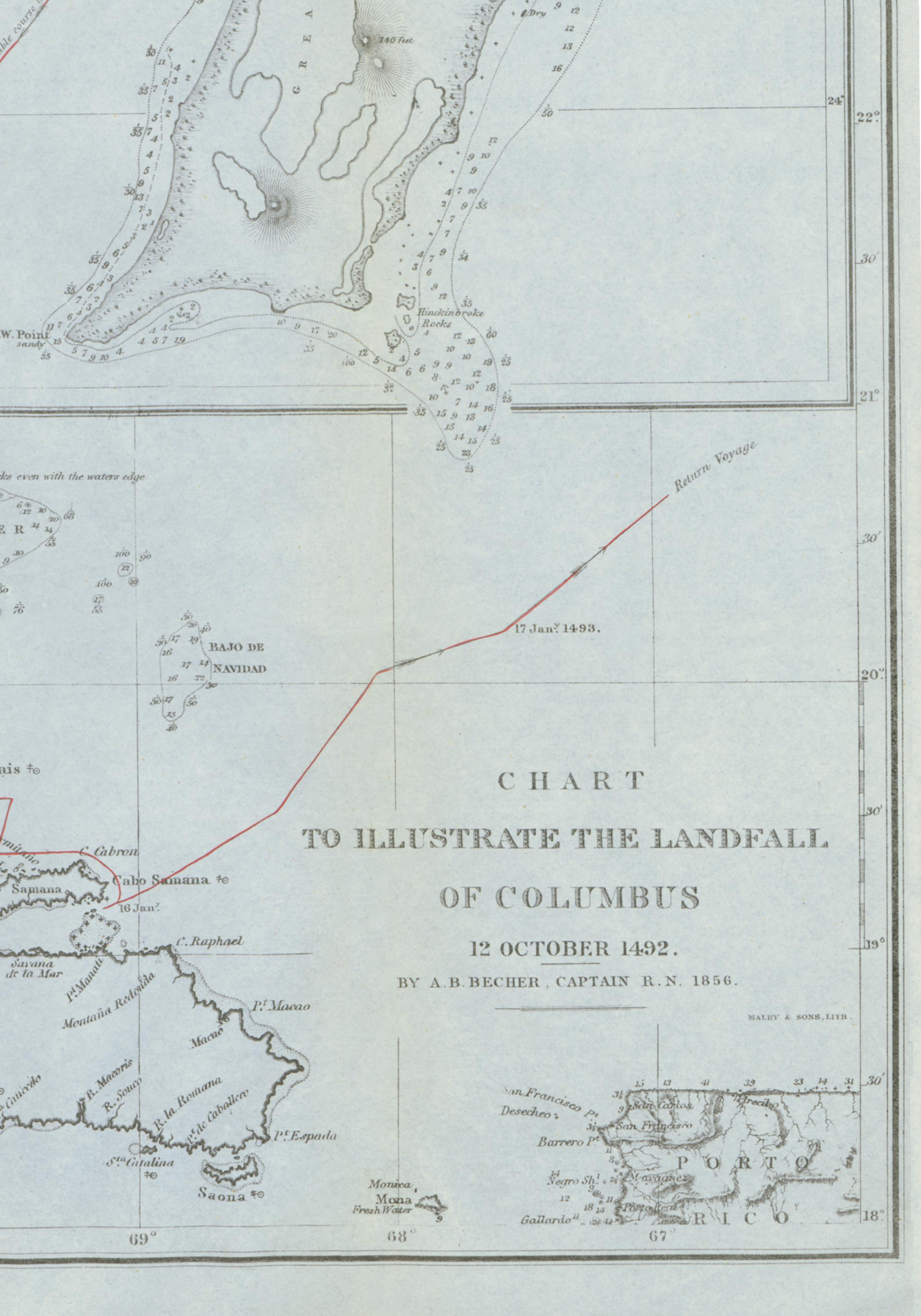
Feet

Feet

Feet







thus the question was found by me in 1847, and I only succeeded in discovering the real track of Columbus after several years of close investigation. It was then I found that neither of them was the landfall of Columbus.

The means of doing so, however, had been supplied by Señor Navarrete, who with a praiseworthy zeal had printed the original papers of Columbus, or what remained of them, in his valuable work extending to five volumes, of the voyages of the early Spanish navigators, the first of which contains those few descriptive passages which have enabled me to trace his progress from his landfall to Cuba.

The island on which Columbus first landed and the several discoveries which he made in his progress to Cuba, are proved by his own words, not only in their description but in the courses which he says that he followed and the distances which he sailed upon them in going from one to another. These so entirely agree with the chart, that no room is left for doubt as to his position at any time among them.

It may be scarcely necessary to premise here, that no attention whatever has been paid to the track of the Admiral across the ocean, in determining which was the island named by him "San Salvador." This would evidently involve so many sources of error in the shape of currents and variation, &c., that, as Navarrete has shown, almost any island might be made his landfall that he could approach from the N.E.

The ships were steering a w.s.w. course as they had been all the preceding day, to which course about a point and a half of westerly variation being allowed, would make them approach the island on a s.w. $\frac{1}{2}$ w. course; when about 10 at night of the 11th October, 1492, the Admiral discovered a light, and calling to him Pedro Gutierrez, pointed it out to him, when he saw it also. But another officer, Rodrigo Sanchez, to whom it was pointed out, could not see it. What direction the light was seen in is not said, but, as the ships were running at the rate of about five or six knots, and land was distinctly seen at two in the morning of the 12th, when they were brought to the wind, they would have run a farther distance of about 20 m. from where it was first seen. Now as the principal hill of Watling Island is about 140 ft. high, it is not impossible that this light might have been that of a fire on its summit just then on the horizon of the ships, or it might have been that of a meteor commonly known by seamen. Nothing more, however, is said of it, and at 2 A.M. on the 12th, the land was so distinct that the ships laid by for daylight, when an island clothed with verdure delighted the eyes of Columbus and his crews, and dispelled the gloom approaching to despair, which had prevailed among them for several days.

The description given by Columbus of this island, which the natives called "Guanahani," is brief, but sufficiently remarkable to recognise it as Watling Island. He says—"It is a tolerably large island, with fine trees and a large lake in the middle of it; it has no mountains, and is covered with verdure, which is pleasing to the eye."*

In respect of the general character of the island, here is a complete statement of that of Watling Island. It is well known to be eaten out, as Captain R. Owen states it, by a lake; the highest part is not more than 140 feet above the sea; the rest is comparatively low ground; it abounds in verdure, and is, in fact, known in these days among the colonists as the garden of the Bahamas. It is rather remarkable that Columbus should have fallen on this island at the end of his voyage, and that it should have been found by him in the same cultivated condition as it appears to have continued. For his description has encouraged the historian of his voyage to draw too flattering a picture of the condition in which a new world was found by Columbus. Every one remembers the vivid description of Washington Irving—"the ample forests and the fruits of tempting hue, but unknown kind," growing among the trees which "overhung the shores of a level, beautiful island several leagues in extent, of great freshness of verdure, covered with trees like an orchard" (vol. i. p. 228).

Columbus found the island in a highly cultivated condition, and is in some degree responsible for the glowing terms in which it is here described, when he completes his own simple picture of it with the assertion, that "it is pleasing to the eye;" for he left the world under the impression that the large lake from which rippling streams fell into the sea was composed of *fresh* water, whereas it is known to be *salt*, and unfit for use; and this accounts for his not watering his ships there—for his not replenishing them with an article of which, after their long voyage across the ocean, they must have been much in need, for water was the first object of which he went in search as he proceeded onward among the islands.

The native name of this island was Guanahani; and Columbus bestowed on it the title of San Salvador, in gratitude for the success of his voyage. But this name, by common consent, has long been applied to Cat Island, as above mentioned, a large island to the n.w. of Watling Island, notwithstanding the want of agreement in its size and general character with the description given of it by Columbus. This difference of character was so evident to Señor Navarrete that he devoted great pains to ascertain what

* "Esta isla es bien grande, y muy llana, y de arboles muy verde, y muchas aguas, y una laguna en medio, muy grande, sin ninguna montaña, y toda ella verde, ques placer de mirarla."—*Nar.*, vol. i. p. 23.

island would correspond with that description. And notwithstanding it was the opinion of a Spanish officer named Muñoz, that Watling Island fully answered to it, the opinions of Señor Muñoz as well as Navarrete, that Columbus was perpetually sailing w., induced the latter to consider the principal island of the Turk Island group as the landfall; and accordingly Navarrete has contrived to lay down a track for the Admiral which takes him past the Caicos and Inagua. This view of the landfall has been supported by Mr. Arthur Gibbs, a resident on the Grand Turk, who has read a paper on the subject before the Literary Society of New York, which has been published in the Transactions of that body.

Among the objections to Cat Island being the Guanahani of Columbus, is the circumstance of the Admiral having gone in his boat from his anchorage on the N.E. side of the island, round the northern end of it, on Sunday morning after sunrise, followed by his ship, and returning to her in the afternoon; a proceeding which it would have been impossible to have accomplished at Cat Island. The size of Cat Island, as well as the want of a channel to the westward of it, precludes the possibility of this being done, and shows at once that Cat Island could not have been the Guanahani of Columbus, independently of those peculiar features of his landfall that are mentioned by him.

Señor Navarrete, in printing the papers of Columbus, says nothing of the anchorage of his ships. But there can be no doubt that between the morning of Friday the 12th and Sunday the 14th of October, 1492, to prevent being drifted away while communication with the shore was going forward, they must have found an anchorage. The plan of the island of Mr. de Mayne, drawn by Captain Barnett, when a midshipman serving with him, shows that the bank on which it stands affords ample room for anchorage on the E. side of the island in about 7 fathoms water; and the nature of the weather might have allowed Columbus to avail himself of it at the time he arrived, for the general character of the weather he seems to have had, was mostly light variable winds and calms; and he says in one part of his journal, that no day since he had been among the islands had passed without rain. From the eastern side of the island, however, Columbus specially states, that he went round it by a N.N.E. course ("Por el camino Nor Nordest"), leaving no doubt on that subject whatever; and it is concluded that the ships followed, as he uses the expression, "Me movi este mañana," in addition to his allusion to the boat expedition. From these premises it is inferred, as he expresses his intention of going to the s.w., that the Admiral, after having explored the western side of the island, returned on board on the w. side, and proceeded on his discovery to the s.w. for the

largest island he had seen from Guanahani. He says in his journal that he had seen so many that he did not know which to visit first; but he also adds that the natives enumerated above a hundred. Probably these two statements were confused with each other in his mind, and he was referring to the latter when he said simply that he should go to the largest in sight.

Now as Columbus not only expressed the intention of going to the s.w., but is actually steering that course while he is writing, when he says, "and so I am doing"—*y así hago*—(*Nav.*, p. 25); and as Rum Cay, being nearest to Watling Island, would be the first that would arrest his attention, on the above authority it is concluded that this island was the *next* which Columbus steered for on leaving Watling Island, as it lies in the direction mentioned by him to the "south-west." Thus he says, on Saturday the 13th of October: "Determiné de aguardar fasta mañana en la tarde, y despues partir para el Sudueste" (*Nav.*, p. 28).

It is somewhat difficult to imagine how Cat Island could be upheld as the San Salvador of Columbus, when it is considered how totally opposite the general character of it is from Watling Island, the features of which in every particular agree with those mentioned by Columbus. Instead of the large lake corresponding to the "muchas aguas" mentioned by the Admiral, Cat Island has for the most part *high land*. But as the boat expedition could not have found its way round it as easily as round Watling Island in the course of a morning, with these objections against Cat Island being the San Salvador of Columbus, it may be safely left to the evidence which will subsequently appear to establish Watling Island as being the true landfall.

In the afternoon of Sunday, the 14th of October, Columbus pursued his course to the s.w. for the next island, having, it appears, afterwards embarked several of the natives of Guanahani, with the view of obtaining information from them as he proceeded. He considers the next island to be about 5 leagues from him, but afterwards says it is rather *seven*. He is becalmed in the course of the night of Sunday, and complains of the current detaining him (well known to seamen in that part), so that with that and the calm which prevailed, he did not reach the island until noon of the next day, Monday; finding a rocky shore, besides no considerable island after all, he is determined to persevere in his westerly course by seeing another very large island to the westward, and accordingly he crowds all the sail he can and reaches the cape of this second island, so as to anchor off it about sunset. This is expressed by Columbus in the following words:—"Y como desta isla vide otra mayor al oueste, cargué las velas. . . . Y cuasi al poner del Sol sorgi acerca del dicho cabo," (p. 26, *Navarrete*). The cape at which he had arrived was the n.w.

extreme of Long Island, and the island which he had thus passed appears in the chart as Rum Cay.* The Admiral says that the face of the island next to San Salvador lies n. and s. about 5 leagues, and that which lies e. and w., which he followed, is more than 10 leagues in extent. These measurements are decidedly exaggerated, but some allowance must be made for the Admiral in this outset of his success. He was now proving the truth of his theory. Every step in his progress was adding to his success, and he was now realizing those discoveries which were to immortalize his name. The n.w. end of Long Island, off which Columbus had anchored, was named by him Cape Santa Maria de la Concepcion, and he makes reference to the island he had passed, by observing in his journal, that notwithstanding it was his desire not to pass any without taking possession, yet in doing so to one he considered it applied to all.†

However, in landing at Cape Santa Maria, the n.w. end of Long Island, he is received by a few unclothed natives, who have no intention of resisting him. On the contrary, they are delighted to see him, and offer him anything in the island; but he soon finds nothing to detain him—he is on the extreme end of a very narrow island—and speedily makes up his mind to continue his course to the westward to another island which he sees, and applies to it the name of Fernandina. But he is desirous of going to the s.w., as the natives he has on board, point that way as well as to the s., as the direction in which there is a large island. However, the wind, which is light, draws to the southward, and he is content to stand to the westward for Fernandina, which he says is 9 leagues farther. On his way to it he takes up a canoe with an Indian, and finds that he had come from Guanahani, but afterwards lets him go with presents of beads, that he may produce a good effect among his countrymen. On Wednesday morning, the 17th of October, he anchors off a settlement on the island he had named Fernandina, and at 9 sends his boat on shore for water, when the Indian is found whom he had taken on board with his canoe on the way; and the Admiral remarks here on the good effect his presents had produced, for the natives had received so favourable a report, that they assisted the boat's crew in filling the casks and carrying them to the boat.‡ We have here the first indication of scarcity of water at Guanahani. Had the large lake and the streams running from it been

* His words are, "Y como la isla fuese mas lejos de cinco leguas, antes sería siete, y la mar me detuvo, sería medio día cuando llegué a la dicha isla."—*Navarrete*, p. 25.

† His words are, "Con todo, mi voluntad era de no pasar por ninguna isla de que no tomase posesion, puesto que tomado de una se puede decir de todas."

‡ "Y ellos mismos traian los barriles llenos al batel."—*Nav.*, p. 29.

pure fresh water, the Admiral would gladly have watered his ships, for we find him looking for it and glad to get it from the natives, of whom he had been inquiring for it as soon as he landed.

The Admiral was still desirous of going to the s.w. or southward, because he had ascertained from the natives that in the former direction there certainly lay a very large city, in which he had been led to the belief, from reading the travels of Marco Polo, that the Emperor of Japan was to be found, and he firmly believed that the islands which he had now discovered were the outskirts of his country; nor was this impression ever removed from his mind by all the experience obtained in his subsequent voyages. This opinion had been encouraged by a chart which he had received from the great geographer of the day, Toscanelli. While the Admiral was offering his services to the Portuguese government, with the assistance of Toscanelli's chart, he had come to the conclusion that if he sailed a certain distance to the w. he must arrive there, but that distance was very far short of the real distance he would have had to sail w. to have reached it, could he have done so. He had observed to the Spanish conference at Salamanca, that, whatever land formed the western boundary of the ocean, he would discover it; and here he was right. But his imagination had become so entirely occupied by the Japanese Emperor and his large city, for whom he had been supplied with letters from Ferdinand and Isabella, that no other land than that of their dominions seems ever to have entered his mind. When he reached Cuba, and considered from the increasing population which he met with, and the extent of coast he had passed along, that he must either be close to his city or to some considerable city of the Emperor's dominions, he then sent off his messengers, one of whom had embarked in the voyage on account of his knowledge of Eastern languages, to deliver these despatches. Such was the infatuation of Columbus on this subject of his heart, that he could receive no accounts of any kind from the natives but which he construed into the meaning that he was on the coast of Japan, and the word *Cipango*, which they mentioned occasionally, was caught at with avidity by him as meaning Japan. On the subject of Japan, the figure of the earth, and that of a terrestrial paradise, his ideas were of the most extraordinary and romantic description.

To return, however, to his anchorage off *Exuma*,—and which appears most probably to have been abreast of *Exuma Harbour*, as it seems to have been the principal settlement off which he had anchored,—his great desire was to go to the southward, but the wind, which on the previous day had been s.e., was now from the southward and drawing to the s.w. dead against him. The

island of Exuma lies in a n.w. and s.e. direction, and would appear by a ridge of cays, which continues from its s.e. end towards Long Island, to connect the two islands, as this ridge sweeps round in an easterly direction towards the cape, off which Columbus had anchored and named Cape Santa Maria; thus leading him to suppose that he had crossed a deep bay. However this may be, it will appear in the sequel that Columbus considered this island of Exuma, which he had named Fernandina, and off which he had anchored, to be connected with that of which Cape Santa Maria was formed.

It was at this anchorage off Exuma that Martin Pinzon, the Commander of the 'Pinta,' knowing the Admiral's wishes, came to him and proposed to continue their course along the island to the n.w., as he had understood from an Indian he had on board that they would be able to go to the s.w., on the western side of it, as soon as they could pass round the n.w. end of it. Accordingly this proposal was adopted by Columbus, and the ships all made sail to the n.w. They had not gone very far, and were about two leagues from the Cape of the Island, when the Admiral was induced to drop his anchor, from seeing what appeared to be the mouth of a large river, and, considering it a good opportunity to obtain water, the boats of the three vessels took their water-casks and proceeded to enter it. Great was their disappointment when, instead of a river, they found a wide-spreading shallow piece of water, which Columbus is careful to describe as having two entrances, or rather one with an island in it, and a harbour which would hold all the ships of Christendom, if it had but depth of water! But it was all shallow, as the shores of Exuma appear to be by the surveys of Captain Barnett, being a low shelving shore, so slightly inclined as to be covered with two or three feet of water only for several miles.*

Leaving this anchorage, the ships still stood on to the n.w., and, having reached the part of the island which the Admiral says runs e. and w.—by which he must have meant the first opening between it and the Cays to the n.w.—the wind, which had been s.w., had headed them and become n.w., from whence it freshened, and, as Columbus observes, it was fair for where they had come from. Thus he was disappointed in his object, and as the evening was near, with the promise of a bad night, the Admiral bore up and stood to the E. and S.E., as he says, to keep off the

* That there may be no misconception of the facts here stated, it may be as well to quote the words of the Admiral. He says,—“Di la vela al Nor-norueste, y cuando fue acerca del cabo de la isla, á dos leguas, hallé un muy maravilloso puerto con una boca, aunque dos bocas se le puede decir, porque tiene un isleo en medio . . . y así surgi fuera dél, y fué en el con todas las barcas de los navios.”—*Nar.*, p. 31.

land, "para apartarme de la tierra" (p. 32), and he experienced what he seemed to have expected and what seamen would perhaps call heavy weather, very different from the light winds he had previously sailed with, although, as he observes, he had not passed a day without rain since he had been among the islands. But it is the kind of weather to be found among the Bahamas at the time of year in which Columbus made his discoveries, or the time of the autumnal rains.

This is, perhaps, one of the most interesting points in the progress of the Admiral between his Landfall and Cuba. The courses which he adopts from thence to s.w. and w. and n.w., when referred to the chart, are completely corroborated by the positions of the islands, and having arrived thus far, when he is overtaken by night and bad weather, and having seen sufficient of the navigation to the southward of him, he very wisely stands out to the eastward, as he says, "to keep off the land."

The same weather, it would appear, continued all the next day, Thursday, the 18th of October, in which he was running along the shore of Long Island in the intervals, when he could see the land, and lying by in the squalls; but on Thursday evening, after sailing round the s.e. end of the island, as far as the state of the wind and daylight permitted, the three ships came to an anchor under it for the night. The passage in which this is related is brief and concise, just such as might be expected from the severe weather it refers to. He says of it in his journal, "and rain fell from midnight till nearly daylight, and we at the s.e. part of the island, where I hope to anchor till it clears up, that we may find the other islands to which we have to go." The next which follows would seem to be added afterwards; but there appears no break, as it is printed by Navarrete. He adds: "As soon as it cleared up we made sail, and went round the island as far as we could, and then anchored but did not land."* This place of anchoring is marked in the chart, and, as will appear in the sequel, was under Cape Verde, the s.w. point of Long Island.

On the following morning, with a fair northerly breeze, the three vessels sallied forth from their anchorage under the Cape, resolved on discovering an island, which Columbus had made out from the Indians he had taken away from Guanahani, lay in an easterly direction, and the Admiral is very particular in stating the several courses which he had directed each ship to adopt. Thus the 'Niña' steered e.s.e., the 'Pinta' s.s.e., and the 'Santa Maria'—his own ship—steered s.e. between them, each having orders to keep their several courses, but to rejoin him at noon; a measure

* "Despues que aclarasció seguí el viento, y fué en deredor de la isla quanto pude y surgi . . . mas no fui en tierra."—*Nar.*, p. 33.

which was well calculated to effect the object in view, and which the wind, being north, would readily admit. They had not sailed long, however, on these courses before land was observed, and by noon all the ships had taken up an anchorage off Cabo del Isleo. It is fortunate that the Admiral has been particular, not only in specifying these courses, but also in describing the bare rocky islet, which he very properly calls "el isleo," referring to the shoal water, not only to the northward of the islet, but also between it and the north shore of the island, which island is called by the Indians "Saomete," and is named by him "Isabella." It is, in fact, thus distinguished at once as the principal of the Crooked Island group.

The anxiety evinced by the Admiral in the determined manner in which the ships set about discovering these islands, is readily accounted for by the abundance of gold which he supposed it to contain, as well as he could make out from the natives. Their information, however, was little to be depended on, for it was obtained from them by means of signs. This mode of communication afterwards misled Columbus so much, that in the course of his passage along the coast of Haiti, he alludes to the little progress that had been made in understanding them, and observes that they appear to communicate intelligence with a view to deceive him. The want of a knowledge of their language was perpetually occasioning disappointment to the Admiral, but in no respect more than that of gold, which was the principal object of his inquiry. In this island of Isabella, where he now was, he had been led to believe that a king resided, who had in his possession so large quantities of it, that even his clothes were ornamented with it, and thence great were his expectations of enriching himself. From this constant misconception also of the real meaning of what the Indians reported, arose the statement, which appears in his letter to the sovereigns of Spain, of a race of people in Cuba who were born with tails, like animals, and another with the snouts of dogs and one-eyed monsters. These extraordinary notions, along with that of the figure of the earth and the terrestrial paradise, already alluded to, were among the marvels of that superstition which was rife in the world in the days of Columbus. He had nobly cleared away, by his voyage across the ocean, the ancient notion of the sea being unnavigable, from its slimy and muddy nature—an idea which almost seems to have been inherited by man from the deluge, because he desired to establish the truth of his theory of a western land. But having found this land, he persevered in maintaining that it was Japan he had found, against all reason, and quoted lengthy passages from Scripture to prove that the figure of the earth was that of a pear, and that the end of the elongated part of it was the seat of the terrestrial paradise, and hence, from its situation, it must necessarily be the most elevated and the nearest to the Heavens.

The Admiral, being under the impression that the island he had left in the morning was Fernandina, gave the name of Isabella to the principal of the group of the Crooked Islands; and whatever might have been his reason, whether out of respect for his patroness, or whether such really was the case, he finds so much delicious perfume proceeding from these islands, that he is lavish in his praises of them. Old seamen, it is well known, are notorious for being able to smell the land at a great distance, but certainly never had an Admiral experienced the delicious odours of sweet flowers more powerfully than those wafted by the breezes from the island of Isabella—the fragrance of a thousand different kinds of trees, and all with fruit and delicious perfume; and, he adds, “the very air was loaded with the delicious scent of beautiful flowers.” The native name of Crooked Island, ‘Saomete,’ or ‘Saometo,’ was exchanged for Isabella, either on account of all this fragrance, or, having named it Isabella, Columbus found its fragrance afterwards; but in deference to the Admiral, and out of respect for a great man who benefited mankind by extending the boundaries of the known world, I have ventured to propose that the few names given by Columbus to these long-lost islands of his earliest discovery in the New World be preserved, and that the name of the Fragrant Isles be substituted for that of the Crooked Islands, as a gracious recognition of those feelings of respect for his patroness Isabella, to whose patronage the voyage was mainly due. In respect to Long Island, the s.w. end of which he had just left, he was under the impression that it formed part of Exuma, which he had named Fernandina. He had seen that Exuma lay in the direction of n.w. and s.e., and might have considered it as continuing in the latter direction, by seeing the range of Cays trending towards the western shore of Long Island, the N. end of which he had named Cape Santa Maria de la Concepcion; and, in running along the eastern shore of Long Island in a night and a day of bad weather, the deception was continued in his mind. In order, therefore, to preserve his names as much as possible, it is here proposed to retain Cape Santa Maria, and give the name of Concepcion to Long Island, and to leave Exuma as Fernandina, being all names actually bestowed by Columbus. The little island which he passed to the northward, called “Rum Cay,” without alluding to it, and which has obtained the name of Concepcion, it is here proposed to call “False Concepcion,” as not being entitled to any notice from Columbus. And thus, Watling Island being the San Salvador, all the names bestowed by the Admiral will be always recognized on the maps; Cat Island being made to restore that high title of which it has deprived its less pretending neighbour Watling Island, and remaining as it is, Cat Island.

High as the expectations of the Admiral had been, they were

gradually dissipated. He attempted to approach the inner shores of the Fragrant group, with the view of visiting the king, by sailing over the large space of water which they inclose; but he found it, as it still is, too shoal even for the small ships of his day. He soon discovers that he has seen all he can: the trees, the shrubs, and the flowers, and the large lakes in which he mentions having killed a snake or two; and he philosophically makes up his mind, as he cannot go to the king, to await at anchor off Cape Laguna, or the Cape del Isleo, a visit from his Majesty. After waiting four days he becomes tired, and hastens his departure to look for another very large island, which he hears the natives call "Colba," and where he is told there are plenty of ships and merchants, and which, he observes in his Journal, must therefore in his opinion belong to the great Khan, the Emperor of Japan. Reverting to the subject of water for his ships, we find this still to be an object of his search, as it has been wherever he landed. Thus, he says at page 150, he is seeking good water "*andando en buscar de muy buena agua*;" and he rewards the natives for bringing it to him on board the ship; but although he alludes to the lakes both here and at Guanahani, he nowhere in his Journal says that the water of them is brackish and unfit for use.

Disappointed hitherto, but with hopes revived of finding something superior to what he has yet met with from the natives about Colba, Columbus is determined to leave his anchorage off Cape del Isleo in the evening of Wednesday, the 24th of October, but is prevented from sailing till midnight for want of wind. He is bent on going to Cuba, but of its actual distance he is quite ignorant, and therefore has prepared for a sea voyage. But he has light winds after he trips his anchor, with heavy rains, and owing to this and a current against him he makes but little way on his course of w.s.w. during the remainder of the night and all the next day, until the dusk of the evening, when he takes a seaman's departure, noting in his journal the bearing and distance of Cape Verde, the s.w. point of Fernandina, as n.w. 7 leagues; and he is careful in describing this as the westernmost part of the S. point of the island. It is this departure which proves the important fact above alluded to, that Columbus, in running along the shore of Long Island, had considered that it was connected with Fernandina.*

In the course of the day the Admiral, who is occasionally very minute in his descriptions, accidentally names every sail of his ship, as they were all set to a gentle breeze; but soon after dark

* The following are the words of the Admiral on this interesting point. On the evening of Wednesday, the 24th of October, he says in his journal,—"*Así anduve al camino fasta que anocheció y entonces me quedaba el Cabo Verde de la isla Fernandina, el qual es de la parte de Sur á la parte de Oeste, me quedaba al Norueste, y hacia de mí á él siete leguas.*"

this breeze freshens up and the Admiral is obliged to reduce her canvas, and tells us that he did not go two leagues all night. At sunrise of the 25th of October he again makes sail, and up to 9 A.M. had run w.s.w. 5 leagues. He then alters his course to w., and up to 1 P.M. went 8 m. an hour, and so continued till 3 P.M. at the same rate, having made good 44 m. (Italian of 4 to the league), and he then sees land, consisting of seven or eight islets, extending n. and s., distant from him 5 leagues. The Admiral dropped his anchor with these islets, as he says, distant from him 5 or 6 leagues. The foregoing courses and distances, corrected for variation, and an allowance made for current, will bring the Admiral to the bank, E. of the Arenas Islets, at the distance stated by him; and from the circumstance of his having been the first European navigator who had ever dropped anchor upon it, as it stands in a compact and conspicuous manner by itself, it is proposed to name it after the Admiral "Columbus Bank," to perpetuate the memory of the man who discovered it, whose whole life was devoted to navigation, and whose name is scarcely to be found on any of his discoveries.

The 'Santa Maria' remained at her anchorage, on this bank, all the next day, the 28th of October, in the course of which Columbus visited the Arenas, most probably in the 'Pinta,' although this does not appear in his journal, for he was not one who would lay idle at anchor doing nothing. He describes the bank and the islets as being all low, and named them "*las Islas de Arena*," and alludes to the little water there was about them to the southward, as far as 6 leagues, which corresponds very well with the charts. They presented no kind of attraction for Columbus, and would most probably be very thinly inhabited, as the small population they have, even now, appears to be employed entirely in collecting salt. The Indians, whom the Admiral took on board at Guanahani, inform him that from these islands the natives reached Cuba in a day and a half, and the next morning at sunrise the ships trip their anchors and make sail on a s.s.w. course. They run 8 m. an hour until 3 P.M., which would make 40 m., and up to the evening 28 m. more on the same course, before which they saw land. Navarrete concludes the journal of this day, Saturday 27th October, by saying up to sunset they had run 17 leagues to the s.s.w. The ships lay by during a rainy night, and running down to the land on the following morning entered a beautiful harbour free from rocks or other dangers, spacious, and with ample depth of water for ships of any burthen, having an entrance large enough for them to work into, with a depth of 12 fathoms in it. There are two distinct conditions of this subject that single out the port of "Nipé" as that in which Columbus had arrived, which conditions do not apply to any other on the

north coast of Cuba. The first is the course and distance run by the Admiral from his anchorage on Columbus Bank to this port, and the other is the remarkable fact, that it is the deepest of all the harbours on the north side of Cuba, there being no other, not only with so deep an entrance, but not even with 12 fathoms in it, the depth which is specified by Columbus. These are conclusive reasons for agreeing with Señor Navarrete that the port of Nipé was that which first received the ships of Columbus in the island of Cuba.

Columbus, it is well known, was a man of an ardent disposition. He frequently expresses in his journal regret at his want of those powers of description that a knowledge of the botanical and medicinal qualities of the trees and herbs which he sees would afford him. He is lost in admiration at the scenes before him. Each one generally surpasses the former in his eyes, and he makes the observation that the islands he discovered have successively from the first increased in size, as well as resources, and that Providence reserved for the last he has discovered qualities far beyond them, and superior to anything he had ever beheld. He describes the scenery at Guanahani as pleasing to behold, and some allowance may justly be made here for eyes which had been accustomed for so many days to the monotonous and constant appearance of sea and sky. When he reaches Fernandina he is still more lavish in his praises of the bounteous hand of nature. He speaks then of branches of trees of different kinds springing from the same stem, as if grafted by the hand of man, but considers it as nature's own work, which Baron Humboldt attributes entirely to the prolific condition of tropical vegetation, these branches being so interlaced as to wear that appearance. When the Admiral is at the Fragrant Group nothing is so delicious as the odour of the flowers and herbage, and this, with the magnificence of the trees overhanging the lagoons, he says, far surpasses the powers of imagination; and here, when he arrives at the port of Nipé, his powers of description altogether fail him. He has exhausted them all. He says his descriptions have been always superlative; here they must be still more so. Everything is different from the scenery of Europe; the palms especially are of a different and finer kind, the trees generally reach to the skies; the shrubs and the flowers are superior, and the parrots and other birds are so numerous that he not only finds his welcome in the New World from their song, but the very atmosphere is darkened by them when on the wing. But Columbus had good reason, in those bright days of his success, to be pleased with all he saw. Every step he took then added to his discoveries, and the charm of novelty afforded him one continual state of enjoyment. He was the origin of all these additions to the Spanish crown; the theory he had adopted and had been

endeavouring to verify for many years of his life, although pronounced chimerical, was now tried and found correct, and he was now enjoying the triumphant answer with which he should return to his patroness Isabella. While the Portuguese were timorously extending their voyages along the African coast, thus had a little fleet of Spanish caravels boldly dashed across an unknown ocean, a sea of darkness, and found the existence of countries and people forming a Western world unknown to that in the East. The reflection that would be constantly before Columbus that he had done all this would justly entitle him to every possible consideration, and he may well be allowed to look with favourable eyes on everything in the west; to exaggerate his San Salvador with its pleasing gardens, and to leave an impression which the future historian with that warmth of feeling which the subject could scarcely fail to impart, would magnify into a large island, would convert the wild luxuriance of untamed nature into ample forests, which, in those climates, abound with extraordinary beauty of vegetation.

Thus far Columbus has not yet been understood in his geographical discoveries, which, it is hoped, the foregoing account will render clear and distinct. His subsequent proceedings have been considered by Señor Navarrete, who has laid down the tracks of his several voyages, and it is fortunate for the author of this paper that there were sufficient data in the letters of the Admiral to lay down his track from the landfall as far as Cuba, as the information which Señor Navarrete has printed, relating to any of those tracks, is quite insufficient for their verification even in the remaining part of his first voyage.

XVII.—*Route between Kustenjë and the Danube by the Kara-su and Yeni-Keui Valleys, with Observations on the Navigation of the Kara-su Lakes and their Origin; also on the requirements necessary to render the Water and Land Communication practicable; being the result of an examination made during a recent journey with Lieut.-Col. Hon. A. Gordon and Lieut.-Col. J. Desaint, de l'Etat Major. By Capt. T. SPRATT, R.N., C.B., of H.M.S. 'Spitfire.' July, 1854.*

Communicated by Capt. WASHINGTON, R.N., F.R.G.S.

Read, June 23, 1856.

KUSTENJÉ stands upon a level but elevated point of land that almost assumes the form of a peninsula. This peninsular form has been taken advantage of, by fortifying the extremity of the promontory with an entrenchment thrown across the narrowest